



Happy Hanukkah to Aruba's Jewish Community!

Last Friday evening, December 15, the first candle for the eight-day holiday of Hanukkah was lit at Temple Beth Israel during Sabbath services. This was the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev, on the Jewish calendar. Rabbi Marcelo Bater presided over a quiet beginning for the "Festival of Lights," a celebration of the Jewish people maintaining their faith against adversity, as is most Jewish holidays.

The story of Hanukkah takes place in the land of Judea where the Syrian king, Antiochus ordered the Jewish people to reject, their religion, their customs and their beliefs and to worship the Greek gods. Some did as they were told, but most refused, one of which was Judah Maccabee.

Judah and his four brothers formed an army using the word "Maccabee", which means "hammer," as their name. After three years of fighting, the Maccabees were finally successful in driving the Syrians out of Israel and reclaimed the Temple in Jerusalem. The Maccabees wanted to clean the building and to remove the hated Greek symbols and statues. On the 25th day of the month of Kislev, the job was finished and the temple was rededicated.

When Judah and his followers finished cleaning the temple, they wanted to light the eternal light, known as the *N'er Tamid*, which is present in every Jewish house of worship. Once lit, the oil lamp should never be extinguished.

A tiny jug of oil was found with only enough oil to burn for a single day. The oil lamp was filled and lit, and then a miracle occurred as the tiny amount of oil stayed lit not for one day, but for eight days.

Around the world, Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah to mark the victory over the Syrians and the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple. The word Hanukkah means "rededication" and the "Festival of Lights" lasts for eight days to commemorate the miracle of the oil.

This year, in celebration of Hanukkah, the Temple Beth Israel has many activities and special events throughout the week, to which they invite island visitors to join with the congregation. On Thursday, December 21, they will have a fun gathering with games, a raffle, and the traditional holiday *latkes*. All are invited meet **at the synagogue** at 6:00 PM, to light together the 7th Hanukkah candle. The lighting will be done at the beach (in front of the synagogue) at sunset, and then the celebration will begin. Everyone, particularly those with children are invited to join in this activity, and mosquito repellent is recommended.

For Shabbat, the congregation will share with Netanya Sasson and her family her first calling to the *Torah* as a **Bat Mitzvah**. All temple members are invited to join Netanya and her family in this special occasion. The *Kabbalat Shabbat* will start as usual at 8:00 PM, and *Shacharit* (with the Torah reading) will be on Saturday at 9:30 AM.

This special week will end on Sunday, December 24, with a community bingo at the Aruba Beach Club. This activity is a fundraising for our community and the youth, beginning at 2:00 PM, it will be great fun and fundraising, with lovely prizes, so the more the merrier!

The Aruban Jewish community extends to all the islanders and visitors a wonderful holiday season, and entreats them to join them in the various celebrations.